

I AUT. to know more*

Robert J. Schwerdt (#505L)

In a March 1971 *Bulletin* article (available from the Perfins Club Library), Laszlo Ettre explained the use of the AUT. perfin and the two other official perfins of Hungary, the three-hole triangle and the three-hole straight line patterns.

The AUT. perfin, short for *automatic*, was applied by postal clerks when they emptied special experimental boxes used for registered letters and packages. Mailers calculated their postage and applied it to their letters before placing them in the special boxes. They paid the registration fee by coin drop.

The only two such registration boxes, put into use in Budapest in 1906, were discontinued less than a year later because they were so unpopular with the pub-

lic. The 10-filler Turul stamp of 1906 was punched with the AUT. perfin and used by postal employees to show that the registration fee had been paid.

According to Ettre, by 1965 only six envelopes had been found

turn address, Menton Kavehaz, was crossed out and a new one added, and since there is a Swiss back cancel dated 25 IX 09, we can assume that the letter was

In his original article, Ettre explained the process that led to the AUT. perfin.

Mailers had to calculate the total postage required for a letter plus the registration fee and apply the correct amount of stamps—minus 10 filler—and deposit the mail in one of the special boxes. They then had to insert a 10-filler coin in a slot. That activated a mechanism which applied the registration mark and serial number and spit out a receipt. When the postal employee emptied the box, he applied the special AUT. perfin to show that the registration fee had been paid.

It sounds like a complex bureaucratic solution to a rather simple problem. No wonder it proved unpopular.



with the perfin, and the fate of the remaining unused perfins was unknown.

Perhaps the cover shown here will help explain what happened to some of the leftover perfins. The cover (it's only a back, not a complete cover) was posted at Budapest on September 24, 1909. Since the original re-

mailed to Switzerland by a person who had access to leftover perfins and was using someone else's stationery.

The envelope back carries seven AUT. perfins and one non-perfin, all the 10-filler Turul design. Without a complete envelope, it is impossible to determine if 80 filler was the correct postage or just someone using up a supply of perfins that he might have got illegally.

At any rate, I have a rare (according to Ettre) official Hungarian perfin on a cover back used unofficially. Quirks like this make perfin collecting lots of fun.

Are there two types of the AUT?

Bob Schwerdt reports that all his copies of the AUT. perfin have a period after the T. However, the illustration in the Hungarian perfins catalog published by Vojtech Maxa in 1976 and the illustration in Ettre's article both show the AUT without the period. Are there two types or are the catalog and article illustrations incomplete?

AUT

**Don't blame the editor for the headline. It came from the author.*